

DETAILED ACTION

1. The following office action is a **Final Office Action** in response to communications received on 01/31/2011.

Currently, claims 1 and 6 have been amended; therefore, claims 1-14 are pending in this application.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

- Claims 1-3, 5-8, 10-11 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamada 2002/0160341 in view of Blass 6,296,489.

Regarding claim 1, Yamada discloses the following claimed limitations: a computerized method of teaching spoken language skills (Para.0001) comprising receiving multiple user utterances by a user of a plurality of words from an audio input device into a computer system, the user utterances comprising recorded spoken responses to application prompts of a display of the computer system (Para.0048 and Para.0049), analyzing the user utterances in the computer system in response to actuation of the analysis prompt so as to detect pronunciation errors in the user utterances in the plurality of words according to basic sound units and Pronunciation error criteria stored in the computer system prior to receiving the multiple

user utterances (Para.0051); providing feedback from the display of the computer system to the user in accordance with the analysis (Para.0052).

Yamada does not explicitly disclose, providing an analysis prompt on the display for actuation by the user after the plurality of words have been recorded.

However, Blass discloses a language training system that teaches, providing an analysis prompt on the display for actuation by the user after the plurality of words have been recorded (col.7, lines 9-22 and FIG 5).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the invention was made, to modify the invention of Yamada in view of Blass by incorporating various controlling virtual buttons or keys into the system (such as a “compare” button as taught by Blass), in order to enable the trainee to activate this button after recording his/her pronunciation so that the system would evaluate the recorded voice and generate immediate feedback to the trainee; thereby enabling the trainee to control his/her learning pace.

Regarding claim 6, Yamada discloses the following claimed limitations: a computerized system for teaching spoken language skills to a user (Para.0001), the system comprising a computer processor that produces application prompts for an audio playback interface (FIG 1, label 116), receives multiple user utterances by the user of a plurality of words from an audio input device of the computerized system, the user utterances comprising recorded spoken responses to the application prompts (Para.0048 and Para.0049), wherein the computer processor further analyzes the user utterances so as to detect pronunciation errors in the plurality of words according to

basic sound units and pronunciation error criteria stored in the computerized system prior to receiving the multiple user utterances (Para.0051), and wherein the computer processor provides feedback to the user on the visual display that shows application screens produced by the computer processor in accordance with the analysis (Para.0052).

Yamada does not explicitly disclose, an analysis prompt on a visual display of the computerized system for actuation by the user after the plurality of words have been recorded.

However, Blass discloses a language training system that teaches, an analysis prompt on a visual display of the computerized system for actuation by the user after the plurality of words have been recorded (col.7, lines 9-22 and FIG 5).

Therefore, as already indicated above with respect to claim 1, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the invention was made, to modify the invention of Yamada in view of Blass by incorporating various controlling virtual buttons or keys into the system (such as a “compare” button as taught by Blass), in order to enable the trainee to activate this button after recording his/her pronunciation so that the system would evaluate the recorded voice and generate immediate feedback to the trainee; thereby enabling the trainee to control his/her learning pace.

Regarding claims 2 and 7, Yamada in view of Blass teaches the claimed limitations as discussed above.

Blass further teaches, the computer system performing garbage analysis of one of the user utterances that determines if the user utterance is a grossly different utterance than the desired utterance (col.9, lines 51-64).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the invention was made, to modify the invention of Yamada in view of Blass by setting predetermined tolerance range(s) in the program subroutine in order to effectively evaluate the trainee's recorded sound file with a model sound file (e.g. by comparing whether the trainee's recorded sound file exceeds the predetermined tolerance range or not), so that the system would generate a more accurate result that accurately reflects the trainee's performance; thereby making the system more dependable.

Yamada in view of Blass teaches the claimed limitations as discussed above.
Yamada further discloses:

Regarding claims 3 and 8, analyzing includes identification of pronunciation error (Para.0052, lines 1-5),

Regarding claims 5 and 10, pronunciation error analysis criteria indicates the errors that are reported to the user (Para.0049 and Para.0052, lines 1-5).

Regarding claims 11 and 13, Yamada in view of Blass teaches the claimed limitations as discussed above.

Blass further teaches, the computer system interferes with the user recording of the utterances if a user utterance is a grossly different utterance than the desired utterance (col.9, lines 11-19 and lines 51-64).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the invention was made, to modify the invention of Yamada in view of Blass by setting predetermined tolerance range(s) in the program subroutine in order to effectively evaluate the trainee's recorded sound file with a model sound file (e.g. by comparing whether the trainee's recorded sound file exceeds the predetermined tolerance range or not), so that the system would generate a more accurate result that accurately reflects the trainee's performance; thereby making the system more dependable.

- Claims 4, 9, 12 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamada 2002/0160341 in view of Blass 6,296,489 and further in view of Ezawa 4,969,194.

Regarding claims 4 and 9, Yamada in view of Blass teaches the claimed limitations as discussed above.

Yamada in view of Blass does not explicitly teach, different pronunciation error analysis criteria are used in accordance with whether the computer system is operating in communication mode or pronunciation mode.

However, Ezawa discloses an apparatus for drilling pronunciation that teaches, different pronunciation error analysis criteria are used in accordance with whether the computer system is operating in communication mode or pronunciation mode (col.12, lines 50-66 and col.13, lines 1-14).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the invention was made, to modify the invention of Yamada in view of Blass and further in view of Ezawa by incorporating various training drill modes each directed to a particular

skill evaluation (e.g. one training mode directed to evaluating stress and accent, and another training mode directed to evaluating consonant pronunciation), in order to effectively evaluate the trainee's language skill by isolating the various parameters involved in the language training so that the trainee would focus on areas where he/she needs more practice; thereby enabling the trainee to improve his/her learning experience.

Regarding claims 12 and 14, Yamada in view of Blass and further in view of Ezawa teaches the claimed limitations as discussed above.

Even if Ezawa does not explicitly state, "*the pronunciation error analysis criteria is less restrictive in the communication mode than in the pronunciation mode*", the reference describes that Ezawa's system evaluates different parameters during the different drilling modes. For instance, during drilling mode E1, the system focuses on evaluating stress and accent of sentences; whereas during drilling mode E4, the system focuses on evaluating the pronunciation of consonants (e.g. see, col.13, lines 1-20).

Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention was made, would readily recognize the fact from the teaching of the prior art that Ezawa's system is less restrictive to particular errors, such as the pronunciations of vowel patterns, when operating in drilling mode E4 than when it operates in drilling mode E1; thereby enabling the system to effectively and accurately identify the student's error with respect a particular drilling mode (without being influenced by irrelevant parameters).

Response to Arguments.

3. Applicant's arguments filled on 01/31/2011 have been fully considered. However, new grounds of rejection has been established in this current Final office action due to the amendment made to the claims; and therefore, Applicant's arguments are now moot in views of the new grounds of rejection.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new grounds of rejection presented in this final office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Bruk A. Gebremichael whose telephone number is (571) 270-3079. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday (7:30AM-5:00PM) ALT. Friday OFF.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, THAI XUAN can be reached on (571) 272-7147. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Bruk A Gebremichael/
Examiner, Art Unit 3715

/XUAN M. THAI/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3715